

ISRAEL AND THE SHAPE OF THOMAS AQUINAS'S
SOTERIOLOGY

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THE CONTEMPORARY understanding of Thomas Aquinas's soteriology has been succinctly expressed in a recent study, *Christology*, by Gerald O'Collins, S.J. O'Collins divides his treatment of Christology into three sections: biblical, historical, and systematic. In his historical section, he offers a brief appraisal of Thomas Aquinas's views. He concludes that Aquinas made both positive and negative contributions. On the positive side, Aquinas "mitigates" Anselm's theory of satisfaction by emphasizing the role of charity. Second, rather than focusing only on Christ's passion, Aquinas treats Christ's entire "human story." Third, Aquinas recognizes the redemptive role of Christ's resurrection.

These positive points are followed by three criticisms. The first is that by including the question as to whether Christ would have become incarnate had Adam not sinned Aquinas separates the order of creation and redemption. O'Collins is concerned that the incarnation not be seen as a "divine rescue operation, mounted subsequently after an original plan of creation went astray." His second criticism is directed against Aquinas's theory that Christ, because of the grace of the hypostatic union, possessed the beatific vision. O'Collins speaks for many modern theologians in arguing that this theory posits a docetic Christ. His third criticism is that Aquinas contributes to the development of the notion of penal substitution. Anselm had proposed that Christ's death restored the divine order of justice; Aquinas adds a new emphasis on

Christ's penal *suffering*. This emphasis on Christ's suffering is seen as helping to "open the door to a monstrous version of redemption: Christ as the penal substitute propitiating the divine anger." Aquinas thus stands as the unwitting predecessor of Luther.¹

Without unfairly singling out O'Collins, I wish to challenge his approach to Aquinas's soteriology. Given the breadth of his project, O'Collins could only be expected to offer a summary of the scholarly consensus about Aquinas's soteriology. Precisely for this reason, his treatment is representative of a widespread misappropriation of Aquinas. Aquinas's treatise is viewed as a collection of propositions from which the modern theologian may select the propositions that remain valuable today. This approach is justified by the assumption that Aquinas's greatness lies in his ability to collect the best Scholastic propositions and organize them according to Aristotelian rules.² Such an assumption is not entirely unwarranted: Aquinas certainly desired to assemble the best insights of his predecessors, and he sought to give theology scientific form. And yet, this approach fails to give due credit to Aquinas's theological gifts. When we seek what unifies the propositions of one of Aquinas's treatises, we should look for theological as well as philosophical intelligibility.

In this article, I will argue that Aquinas's soteriological propositions are unified by his insight into how Christ's passion fulfills the Old Law.³ By overlooking this unifying factor, O'Collins misunderstands Aquinas's reasons for emphasizing Christ's charity, beatific vision, and penal suffering. The main task of this essay, therefore, will be to examine the role of the Old Law in Aquinas's treatise on Christ's passion. Before we undertake this

¹ Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 206-7.

² A theologian as great as Hans Urs von Balthasar fell into this mistake. He treats Aquinas as "more of a philosopher than a theologian," whose gift lay in philosophical organization rather than theological insight (cited in James J. Buckley, "Balthasar's Use of the Theology of Aquinas," *The Thomist* 59 [1995]: 517).

³ For Aquinas, since Christ is the incarnate Word, everything that he does (from his coming into the world to his resurrection and ascension) has redemptive significance. Nonetheless, Christ's passion represents the apogee of his redemptive work, since it is primarily here that he brings the Old Law to completion.

task, however, we should briefly summarize Aquinas's conception of the place of the Old Law in the history of salvation.

The rational faculties of Adam and Eve were originally rightly directed to God. This state of "original justice" was itself a gift of grace (*STh* I, q. 95, a. 1). Original sin, as a fall from grace, disordered the rational faculties: they no longer were subject to God, nor did they rule the sense appetites (*STh* I, q. 85, a. 1). Under the sway of the sense appetites, the rational faculties' promptness to perceive and obey the "natural law" (i.e., the rational creature's participation in the "eternal law," the holy order that God has inscribed in creation) was weakened. As a result, in addition to the state of sin brought about by the original rejection of God's grace, human beings became culpable for numerous personal sins.

The giving of the Old Law on Sinai began in earnest the process of extricating man from sin. The Decalogue, Aquinas argues, reveals the tenets of the natural law (*STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1). The other precepts of the Old Law structure Israel's cultic and political life around these tenets. Aquinas explains that in addition to the moral precepts, the Old Law contains ceremonial and judicial precepts—determinations of the moral precepts by which man is directed to God and to fellow men, respectively. These precepts, while good in themselves, are not "perfect," because they prefigure something higher (*STh* I-II, q. 104, a. 2). The ceremonial precepts, primarily those instituting the sacrificial system, cultically represent the right order of man to God; but the sacrifice of animals inevitably falls short of this right order. The judicial precepts, primarily those instituting the regulation of exchange and punishment for crime, are also figurative, although in a different way. By shaping the government of Israel, they suggest the right order that should exist between man and fellow men, but in practice, like any human politics, they are unable to produce this right order.

Thus the Old Law could only prefigure the final restoration of "right order" and the meriting of salvation. Nonetheless, Aquinas insists, participation in the Messiah's salvific action did not begin only after the event had taken place. Rather, such participation

was possible for the people living under the Old Law, insofar as by faith, hope, and love they were joined to the prefigured salvific action of the prophesied Messiah.⁴ Since the New Law is simply the grace of the Holy Spirit that enables man to participate in the Messiah's transcendent fulfillment of the Old Law, the New Law is active even during the period of the Old. Still, the New Law is not ahistorical: it hinges upon Christ's salvific work. Aquinas emphasizes that "the New Law fulfills the Old by justifying men through the power of Christ's Passion" (*STh* I-II, q. 107, a. 2). When Christ's passion occurs, of course, it brings to an end the Old Law, now taken up into his salvific action. As members of his mystical body (since his person is divine, all people can be joined to him through the grace of the Holy Spirit), we share in the profound reconciliation that his suffering brings. And by sharing in the merit of his suffering, we receive the promise of rising with him to eternal life.

Having reviewed the relationship of the Old and New Laws, we are now ready to turn to Aquinas's treatise on Christ's passion. Since Adam and Eve fell through disobedience, Christ's salvific action must be (as St. Paul says) an act of obedience. In *STh* III, q. 47, a. 2, Aquinas deepens this insight. He argues that Christ's supreme act of obedience—his passion—actually *fulfills* the Old Law. He points to St. John's Gospel, which records Jesus's final words from the cross, "It is consummated." Aquinas understands Christ to mean that the Old Law has finally been consummated in him. Aquinas then shows briefly how Christ's perfect act of obedience, flowing from the supernatural grace that infused his soul at the moment of the hypostatic union, simultaneously fulfills all three aspects of the Old Law. Since charity is the form of all the virtues, Christ's perfect charity, which he displayed "inasmuch as he suffered both out of love of

⁴ Significantly, the final question that Aquinas treats before taking up Christ's passion concerns his transfiguration (*STh* III, q. 45). The presence of Moses and Elijah signifies Christ's intimate relationship to the saints of the Old Covenant, who recognized him in the Old Law, and foretold his coming in the prophetic books. Although these saints, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, possessed the supernatural virtue of faith in Christ's passion, as well as the virtues of hope and love, their final restoration awaited the event of Christ's passion, in which he paid the "debt" incurred by original sin (*STh* III, q. 49, a. 5, ad 1).

the Father . . . and out of love of his neighbor," perfectly fulfilled the moral precepts of the Law. Secondly, Christ perfectly fulfilled the ceremonial precepts (which direct man to God) in the self-sacrifice that he offered upon the cross. Finally, Aquinas employs Psalm 63:5 to explain how Christ perfectly fulfilled the judicial precepts (which direct man to fellow-man): "He *paid that which He took not away*, suffering Himself to be fastened to a tree on account of the apple which man had plucked from the tree against God's command." In other words, Christ, though innocent, took upon himself the suffering due to all others.

In *STh* III, q. 47, a. 2, therefore, Aquinas provides the basic framework that unites the material of his treatise, which spans qq. 46-49. He seeks to explore, and to balance, the three ways in which Christ's passion simultaneously fulfilled the Old Law. Aquinas, of course, does not arrange his questions around the three kinds of precepts. He arranges his material in a more scientific order: q. 46 concerns the passion itself; q. 47, the efficient cause of the passion; and qq. 48-49, the effects of the passion. Yet in each of these questions, his concern is to show how Christ's passion is redemptive within the context established by Israel's Law. This concern enables Aquinas to achieve a profound balance between Christ's charity, his sacrifice, and his suffering.

I. THE CEREMONIAL PRECEPTS

We will begin with Christ's fulfillment of the ceremonial precepts, because this aspect of the Old Law has a special place in Aquinas's understanding of Christ's passion.⁵ Earlier in his Christology, Aquinas had devoted an entire question to Christ's priesthood (*STh* III, q. 22), underscoring the special significance of the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law. The ceremonial

⁵ This thesis is defended by Romanus Cessario, O.P., in *The Godly Image* (Petersham: St. Bede's Publications, 1990). Cessario notes the dependence of Aquinas's treatment upon the Epistle to the Hebrews, which focuses upon Christ's priestly mediation. See also Albert Patfoort, O.P., "Le vrai visage de la satisfaction du Christ selon St. Thomas," in *Ordo Sapientiae et Amoris*, ed. Carlos-Josaphat Pinta de Oliveira, O.P. (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg, 1993), 247-66.

precepts, as Aquinas states in *STh* I-II, q. 101, a. 1, are properly the determinations of the moral law “which pertain to the Divine worship,” and so it is not surprising that they have foremost dignity in his presentation.

Before turning to the fulfillment of the ceremonial precepts in Christ’s passion, we should examine more closely how Aquinas, in his treatise on the Old Law, interprets the ceremonial precepts, in particular the laws about sacrifices. In contrast to the modern view of sacrificial offerings, Aquinas attributes to sacrifice a positive symbolic force. In *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 3, ad 8 he notes that Christ’s sacrifice is prefigured in the Old Law by three kinds of sacrifices: burnt offerings, peace offerings, and sin offerings, each of which represent a stage of the spiritual life. Since Aquinas holds that people living under the Old Law truly participated (through the Old Law) in the New Law, he can apply the later Christian distinction between the “counsels” and the “commandments” to the spiritual life of the Israelites. Burnt offerings, he suggests, were intended to “show reverence to His majesty, and love of His goodness: and typified the state of perfection as regards the fulfilment of the counsels.” Burnt offerings were burnt completely in order to represent the self-offering of the whole man. Similarly, peace offerings were offered out of thanksgiving for divine favors received, and also in supplication for new favors. Aquinas holds that this kind of sacrifice “typifies the state of those who are proficient in the observance of the commandments.” The peace offering was divided into three parts, one to be burnt, one for the priests, and one for the offerers. Aquinas explains that this threefold division signified the way in which salvation is from God, is mediated through priests, and is received by those who ask for it.

The third kind of sacrifice, the sin offering, represents (as the name implies) imperfection. Aquinas states that this kind of sacrifice “was offered to God on account of man’s need for the forgiveness of sin: and this typifies the state of penitents in satisfying for sins.” This sacrifice was the special duty of the priests of the Old Law.

With this background, we will understand more easily how Christ fulfills the ceremonial precepts.⁶ In *STh* III, q. 48, a. 3, Aquinas asks whether Christ’s passion operated by way of sacrifice. His answer explores the nature of Christ’s sacrifice. The proper meaning of sacrifice, he notes, is “something done for that honor which is properly due to God, in order to appease him [*ad eum placandum*].” This definition emphasizes the reconciling aspect of sacrifice; and in this sense, Christ’s sacrifice was primarily a sin offering. On the other hand, Christ’s sacrifice also embodied the other two kinds of sacrifice. Aquinas cites Augustine to make clear the relationship between sacrifice as a perfect act and as a sin offering: “A true sacrifice is every good work done in order that we may cling to God in holy fellowship, yet referred to that consummation of happiness wherein we can be truly blessed.” Christ’s perfect charity meant that his sacrifice was both a burnt offering and a peace offering, since as a reverential and thankful gift of the whole person, his sacrifice anticipated the “consummation of happiness”; but his sacrifice was also a sin offering, intended to enable us to regain “holy fellowship” with God. Christ’s sacrifice thus draws together the three kinds of sacrifices in the Old Law. Aquinas concludes with two more citations of Augustine. Augustine compares the relationship of Christ’s one sacrifice to the various sacrifices of the Old Law with

⁶ See also *STh* II-II, q. 85 “Of Sacrifice,” where Aquinas discusses sacrifice as part of the virtue of religion, which is in turn part of the virtue of justice. In this question, Aquinas conceives of sacrifice as part of holiness, rather than as a penance for sin. In a. 1, he holds that offering sacrifice belongs to the natural law. In a passage that might well serve as a commentary upon the famous “five ways” to show the existence of God, Aquinas explains:

Natural reason tells man that he is subject to a higher being, on account of the defects which he perceives in himself, and in which he needs help and direction from someone above him: and whatever this superior being may be, it is known to all under the name of God. Now just as in natural things the lower are naturally subject to the higher, so too it is a dictate of natural reason in accordance with man’s natural inclination that he should tender submission and honor, according to his mode, to that which is above man.

In a. 2, Aquinas explains that “the sacrifice that is offered outwardly represents the inward spiritual sacrifice . . . since, as stated above [*STh* III, q. 81, a.7; q. 84, a. 2], the outward acts of religion are directed to the inward acts.”

the relationship of a single concept to the many words in which it may be expressed. Indeed, Christ's sacrifice not only unifies the various kinds of sacrifices of the Old Law, but also unifies the priest with the victim, and the one who offers with the one who receives.

Emphasizing that Christ's sacrifice unifies the various kinds of sacrifices of the Old Law leaves Aquinas with a difficult problem: if Christ's sacrifice is a "positive" sacrifice, then why is it a sacrifice of human flesh, an act explicitly forbidden in the Old Law? In the same article, Aquinas confronts this objection. Because the ceremonial precepts are "figures," we should expect that the reality would surpass them. Although it would have been unfitting to sacrifice human flesh under the Old Law, Christ's flesh is a fitting sacrifice for four reasons. As with many of his arguments from fittingness, Aquinas draws these reasons from Augustine.

First, Christ's sacrifice is ordered to the redemption of human beings, and specifically to the sacramental system. Therefore, the sacrifice of Christ's flesh is fitting, since otherwise men could not truly receive Christ in the Eucharist. Second, God took on flesh precisely in order to offer it in sacrifice; otherwise, God would not have needed to become incarnate. Third, Christ's flesh was unblemished by sin, and therefore constituted a perfect offering which, when participated through the sacraments, "had virtue to cleanse from sins." Fourth, in Christ's case the offering of human flesh was acceptable, since he himself willed in perfect charity to offer his own flesh.⁷

Having demonstrated that Christ's sacrifice must be seen as a positive offering, Aquinas devotes the next article (*STh* III, q. 48,

⁷ It is worth having in mind Aquinas's understanding of "charity." Charity requires expending oneself for the beloved, even to the extent of sacrificing one's own life. The well-being of the state, for example, requires a political love by which citizens "love the good of the state so that it might be preserved and defended. . . . So much is this so, that men would expose themselves to dangers of death or neglect of their own private good, in order to preserve or increase the good of the state" (Thomas Aquinas, *On Charity*, trans. Lottie H. Kendzierski [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984], 43). Supernatural love, therefore, requires at least a willingness to sacrifice the life of the body. Christ's bloody self-sacrifice perfectly manifests this supernatural charity. A lesser sacrifice could not have provided an adequate exemplar of supernatural charity.

a. 4) to exploring the nature of Christ's sacrifice specifically as a sin offering. As a sin offering, Christ's sacrifice operates according to the mode of redemption. In *STh* I-II, q. 87, Aquinas had already explained that mortal sin incurs a "debt" of eternal punishment, because the order of divine justice is transgressed. So long as man is infected by original sin, he owes this "debt" of punishment. Moreover, he cannot pay it of himself: "if a sin destroys the principle of the order whereby man's will is subject to God, the disorder will be such as to be considered in itself irreparable, although it is possible to repair it by the power of God" (*STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 3). Original sin imposed an ontological "debt" upon human nature; precisely by turning away from God, man incurred the punishment of being turned towards death. Christ's death, as the death of a sinless man, pays this "debt." The order of divine justice is restored. Indeed, Christ's perfect sin offering is "superabundant" compensation for our sin because of the dignity of his bodily life, which is united to the divine nature in the Person of the Word.

Christ's sacrifice can also be described as a "satisfaction." Anselm developed the concept of satisfaction that Aquinas uses in *STh* III, q. 48, a. 2: "He properly atones [*satisfacit*] for an offense who offers something which the offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offense." In this article, Aquinas notes three objections to the idea that Christ's passion brings about our salvation by way of atonement. The first objection argues that no one can make compensation for the sins of another. The second objection points out that since crucifying Christ, God incarnate, was the most grievous of all sins, the crucifixion could not atone for this new sin. The third objection holds that Christ's passion is merely one good act, which cannot balance out all sins.

Aquinas's answers reveal how he overcomes the legalistic tendency of Anselm's definition by exploring the dynamics of Christ's priesthood. To the first objection, he responds that all who believe in Christ participate in his passion, as members of his mystical body. Repeating an argument previously made in *STh* I-II, q. 87, a. 7, he notes that oneness in charity enables the lover to atone for the beloved. To the second, he insists once again that

Christ's sacrifice should be seen as positive, since Christ, in his human will (perfectly conformed by charity to his divine will), chose freely to atone for our sins. To the third, Aquinas explains that the compensation offered by Christ is not merely the suffering of a particular instance of human nature, but rather the suffering of a human nature hypostatically united to the divine Person of the Logos. It is the hypostatic union which accounts for the perfect virtue of his human soul, and which makes the suffering of his human nature more than sufficient compensation for all sins.

II. THE MORAL PRECEPTS

Anselm is known for his theory of satisfaction, Abelard for his insistence that charity is the key to Christ's saving work. Aquinas argues that both are right. In this he is again following the Old Testament, which considered love to be the primary element of sacrifice, and indeed of worship.⁸ Christ could not have fulfilled the ceremonial precepts without also perfectly fulfilling the moral precepts. The prophets of the Old Law had condemned the Temple sacrifices of their day as mere external forms, undertaken without faith or charity. Aquinas, therefore, is careful to emphasize the role of charity in Christ's sacrifice.⁹

In *STh* II-II, qq. 23-25, Aquinas notes that charity is the movement of the will toward the Divine good *as good*, "according as it can be apprehended by the intellect" (q. 24, a. 1). The charitable will loves the Divine good for the Divine good's own sake, and loves all human beings insofar as they are referred to this good. As a supernatural virtue, charity is "created" participation in the Holy Spirit, who is Love. No true virtue is possible without charity, since all virtue is ordered to the good, and charity, which is ordered to the ultimate good, is necessary to direct all virtues perfectly towards the good. In this sense

⁸ See for example Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Isa 1:11f.; Ps 50:8-13; Sir 34:19-21; Mic 6:7. Aquinas makes clear that although the moral precepts of the Old Law concern "natural" virtues, it is impossible to fulfill the Old Law without the supernatural virtue of charity (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1; q. 100, a. 10, ad 3).

⁹ Cf. *STh* III, q. 47, a. 4, ad 2; q. 48, aa. 2 and 3; q. 49, a. 4.

charity is called the "form" of all the virtues as well as the "source of merit" for all our acts.

Although it might seem that charity is the same in every person who possesses charity, in fact there are various degrees of charity, corresponding to the degree of the person's participation of the Holy Spirit. In *STh* II-II, q. 24, a. 8, Aquinas notes that human charity can be called "perfect" in three ways. For our purposes, it will be sufficient to note the highest perfection of human charity, that manifested by Christ. Aquinas explains that the most perfect kind of human charity is reserved for those who are fully united to Christ in heaven. On earth, only Christ displays this most perfect charity, which requires "that a man's whole heart is always actually borne towards God." The grace of the hypostatic union provides Christ with this perfection, which enables his human will always to be in accord with his divine will. In this state of highest human charity, the person is able to "think always actually of God, and to be moved by love towards Him."

The connection that Aquinas makes here between always thinking of God and always loving him is highly significant for our purposes. Christ possesses while on earth the most perfect charity possible for man, precisely because of his possession of the beatific vision, which consists of contemplating God always. It is this perfect charity that enables Christ to fulfill perfectly all aspects of the Law. Only Christ's possession of the beatific vision enables him to love *perfectly*, as man, the ultimate end that his intellect fully apprehends; and thus Christ can fulfill perfectly the ceremonial precepts corresponding to this ultimate end. Likewise, Christ can fulfill perfectly the judicial precepts because he suffers out of charity for each and every man, known to him only by means of the beatific vision.¹⁰

¹⁰ Aquinas discusses Christ's beatific knowledge (or contemplative enjoyment of God) in *STh* III, q. 10. In the first article of this question, Aquinas explains how Christ's contemplation (as man) of God includes knowledge of all created things.

The soul of Christ knows all things in the Word. For every created intellect knows in the Word, not all simply, but so many more things the more perfectly it sees the Word. Yet no beatified intellect fails to know in the Word whatever pertains to itself. Now to Christ and to His dignity all things to some extent belong, inasmuch as all things are

Christ's beatific vision, in short, enables him to know perfectly what he is doing, and this knowledge enables him to love perfectly both God and those whom he is reconciling to God. Since Christ knows, as man, how his acts fit into the divine plan, his acts truly express the incarnate manifestation of the love of God. Thus for Aquinas, as for Abelard, the person who meditates upon Christ's passion is able to "[know] thereby how much God loves him, and is thereby stirred to love Him in return, and herein lies the perfection of human salvation" (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 3). God's movement of love towards us inspires, by the power of the Holy Spirit, a corresponding movement in us towards God. By this love, we appropriate the reconciliation gained for us by Christ's passion. Faith alone does not cleanse from sin; only faith working through love can truly participate in Christ's passion (*STh* III, q. 49, a. 1, ad 5).

Aquinas thus sees Christ's passion as the most complete human expression of charity. Indeed, he argues that even the smallest details of the passion are totally infused by charity. Christ, on the cross, remained always an active Lover, never a passive victim. This activity manifested itself most evidently in his prayer for his persecutors (*STh* III, q. 47, a. 4, ad 1). Since the perfected soul has complete governance of the body, Aquinas can also hold that Christ's charity governed the very entrance of the nail into his flesh. In Aquinas's view, Christ's charitable will must actually *permit* the infliction of the wounds of the crucifixion, because

subject to Him. Moreover, He has been appointed Judge of all by God, because He is the Son of Man, as is said John v. 27; and therefore the soul of Christ knows in the Word all things existing in whatever time, and the thoughts of men, of which he is the Judge.

The knowledge of all things in the Word cannot cause sadness, because all things are, ultimately, ordered fittingly to God. Therefore, charity, which loves all things insofar as they are ordered to the ultimate end, cannot coexist with sadness. Yet a person possessing charity in this life can have sorrow, in the practical intellect, for the temporal disorder of man. In *STh* II-II, q. 28, a. 2, ad 1, discussing joy, Aquinas explains that while the joy of charity cannot be *mixed* with sorrow, nonetheless in another sense "charity makes us weep with our neighbor in so far as he is hindered from participating in the Divine good." See also Guy Mansini, O.S.B., "St. Thomas on Christ's Knowledge of God," *The Thomist* 59 (January 1995): 91-124. It should be noted that once we grant the fact of the hypostatic union, the idea that Christ's soul is beatified by this union seems unsurprising.

Christ's "spirit had the power of preserving his fleshly nature from the infliction of any injury; and Christ's soul had this power, because it was united in unity of person with the Divine Word" (*STh* III, q. 47, a. 1). Had Christ's soul not had this power, Aquinas suggests, his perfect freedom in submitting to his passion would have been compromised, since he would have lost his freedom at the moment when the soldiers bound him and led him away. In short, Aquinas can truly affirm that "Christ's love was greater than his slayers' malice" (*STh* III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2). Although Christ's passion may seem to represent the triumph of sin, it is in fact the triumph of Christ's charitable human will, acting as an instrument of the divine will.

In Aquinas's view, therefore, Christ's human will is empowered, by the grace of the hypostatic union, to embody at every moment of his life the love of God for all human beings. As he says in *STh* III, q. 47, a. 3, ad 3, "The Father delivered up Christ, and Christ surrendered Himself, from charity." Thus Christ, in fulfillment of the moral precepts of the Old Law, willed his death with perfect charity—that is, with complete love for his death's object, known to him by means of the beatific perfection of his human intellect. The necessary conformity between Christ's two wills provides a basis for estimating Christ's psychological state upon the Cross: both his intellect and his will must remain clear and ordered to their object, since intellectual confusion always distorts the will.

Finally, by participating in Christ's passion as members of his mystical body, we are conformed to him to such a degree that his moral perfection becomes a true example for us. In *STh* III, q. 46, a. 3, Aquinas notes that Christ's passion was the most suitable means to achieve the end of man's salvation, first because it revealed God's charity, but second "because thereby He set us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and the other virtues displayed in the passion, which are requisite for man's salvation." Christ's perfect charity does not therefore make him "superhuman"; rather he becomes the "exemplar," or formal cause, of the holiness which is objectively the ultimate end of every human being.

III. THE JUDICIAL PRECEPTS

Thirdly and lastly, Christ fulfills the Old Law's judicial precepts, that is, those which determine the moral precepts towards our fellow man. In a sense, we have already touched upon the fulfillment of the judicial precepts by discussing how Christ's passion operates according to the modes of "redemption" and "satisfaction." Although God could have redeemed man simply by command, he chose to restore the order of justice by the death of a sinless man, in other words, by a satisfactory sin offering. By this choice, Aquinas argues, God displays "more copious mercy" than he would have had he simply forgiven sins by fiat (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 1, ad 3), since in Christ's passion, God enabled *man* to restore the order of justice. Christ, as man, restores justice both between man and God, and between men. "Redemption" and "satisfaction" primarily concern the former, since they are directed to God. However, Christ's satisfactory suffering was also a suffering *for all men*. He is related to all other men by his suffering, as the one who bears their suffering. In this way, his suffering is the fulfillment of the judicial precepts of the Old Law, which concerned punishment for crime and the rules of exchange.

The fulfillment of the judicial precepts, like the fulfillment of the ceremonial and moral precepts, could not have been accomplished by a mere man. In his treatise on the Old Law, Aquinas had explained that some of the judicial precepts call for severe punishment "because a greater sin, other things being equal, deserves greater punishment" (*STh* I-II, q. 105, a. 2, ad 9). Since Christ suffers for all sins, it is fitting that he undergo the greatest punishment. He is able to do so because his human nature, as the human nature of the Logos, could suffer with more physical and spiritual sensitivity than other men. Therefore, although Christ's "slightest pain would have sufficed to secure man's salvation, because from His Divine Person it would have had infinite virtue" (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 6, obj. 6; cf. ad 6), Christ fulfilled the judicial precepts by undergoing the greatest suffering. Moreover, in contrast to the limited scope of the actions of a mere man, Christ was able to fulfill the judicial precepts because

he could direct his suffering to each human being: while suffering our penalty, he contemplated our ultimate end, and referred his suffering to the end of our being united with God.

We have already examined why Aquinas holds that Christ must have possessed the beatific vision, even on the cross. Aquinas argues that the hypostatic union would have permanently glorified Christ's soul at the very moment of its creation. This, then, has to be balanced with the fact of Christ's supreme suffering on the cross. Aquinas explains that the higher part of Christ's soul (that is, his speculative intellect) "was not hindered in its proper acts by the lower," and therefore "the higher part of His soul enjoyed fruition perfectly while Christ was suffering" (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 8). But if Christ's speculative intellect was perfectly serene, how could Christ be said to suffer? Aquinas answers that if by "suffering" one means the confusion of the speculative intellect, then it is true that Christ could not have suffered in this way.

According to Aquinas, Christ suffers in two ways. First, he suffers through the sensitive powers of his soul, which apprehend his bodily pain. Second, he suffers in his practical intellect by seeing what is contrary to the love of God, even while his speculative intellect continues to enjoy perfect contemplation of God. As Aquinas explains in *STh* I, q. 77, a. 3, the intellect is one power, but it has two functions, which may be termed the speculative and the practical intellects. The speculative intellect is concerned with the contemplation of eternal things, the practical intellect with the disposal of temporal things (*STh* I, q. 79, a. 9). Aquinas uses this psychology to explain Christ's suffering on the cross: Christ "suffered indeed as to all His lower powers; because in all the soul's lower powers, whose operations are but temporal, there was something to be found which was a source of woe to Christ" (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 7). In contrast, Christ's higher reason or speculative intellect could not experience sadness, because its object is God, who is infinite Goodness.

In *STh* III, q. 46, a. 6, Aquinas details these two aspects of Christ's suffering. The cause of his sensitive pain is evident: the wounding of his body. In contrast, his "interior pain" or "sadness" must have had multiple causes. Aquinas suggests that

Christ's practical intellect would have experienced acute sadness especially for the sins of humankind; for the sin of those (including his apostles) who betrayed, abandoned, or condemned him; and for his approaching death. Aquinas then argues that Christ's sensitive pain and intellectual sadness were the greatest possible on earth. In this regard, he notes that the sources of Christ's pain were the greatest, because the wounds of the crucifixion afflicted the most sensitive parts of the body, and because Christ grieved for *all* sins. Second, Christ's body and soul were perfectly made, and so they possessed a greater sensitivity to suffering than any inferior body and soul would possess. Third, Christ did not allow the higher powers of his soul to soothe the sensitive pain or interior sadness experienced by the lower powers of his soul. Fourth, Christ *chose* to suffer, "and consequently He embraced the amount of pain proportionate to the magnitude of the fruit which resulted therefrom." He freely willed to endure the greatest suffering, and all classes of suffering (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 5), in order to make manifest his fulfillment of the judicial precepts.

Aquinas is careful to add two caveats. First, although Christ's interior sadness is "the greatest in absolute quantity," his sadness remains governed by the "rule of reason"; that is, the sadness in his lower reason is governed by his higher reason (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 2). Therefore, Christ's sadness is not despairing or estranged from the truth, and so exteriorly it may not have seemed to be the greatest sadness. Interiorly, however, since his sadness is measured by his higher reason's perfect wisdom, his sadness has, of all human suffering, the greatest intensity: "this grief in Christ surpassed all grief of every contrite heart,¹¹ both because it flowed from a greater wisdom and charity, by which the pang of contrition is intensified, and because He grieved at the one time for all sins, according to Isa. liii. 4: *Surely He hath carried our sorrows*" (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 4). Aquinas also points out that Christ's grief for his approaching death would, by itself, surpass every other human grief, since Christ's bodily life is that of the Son of God.

¹¹ Guilt does not add any intensity to grief. Thomas points out that although a guilty man "grieves not merely on account of the penalty, but also because of the crime," nonetheless the grief of an innocent man is more intense "by reason of his innocence, insofar as he deems the hurt to be the more undeserved" (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 5).

Second, Aquinas notes that in order to take on the penalty for our sin, Christ does not need to take on the penalty of eternal suffering, or damnation. The judicial precepts require a punishment proportionate to the sin. Since Christ bears all the sins of this world, his suffering is fittingly the greatest of this world. His suffering does not need to match the suffering of the damned, since their suffering pertains to the next world. As Aquinas states, "The pain of a suffering, separated soul belongs to the state of future condemnation, which exceeds every evil of this life, just as the glory of the saints surpasses every good of the present life" (*STh* III, q. 46, a. 6, ad 3). Christ could not take on this eternal suffering, since eternal suffering consists precisely in having rejected Christ's passion.

This context stands behind Aquinas's interpretation of certain scriptural passages which, when not interpreted in light of Christ's perfect charity, confuse theologians. In *STh* III, q. 46, a. 4, ad 3, Aquinas gives his interpretation of four such passages: Deuteronomy 21:23 ("He is accursed of God that hangeth on a tree"); 2 Corinthians 5:21 ("Him that knew no sin, for us He hath made sin"); Galatians 3:13 ("Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"); and Romans 8:3 ("having the resemblance of the flesh of sin"). Following Augustine, he holds that these texts refer to Christ having "become sin" by taking on "the penalty of sin," which is death.

God willed that Christ, as man, pay this penalty. On this basis, Aquinas approaches another difficult text. He argues that Christ's words from the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46), are intended to reveal that God could have shielded Christ from the passion, but did not (*STh* III, q. 47, a. 4). The cry of abandonment reveals the central truth of the passion: God gave his only Son into the hands of sinners, to be numbered among the guilty. As we have seen, Aquinas teaches that God did this so that the order of justice might be restored not extrinsically by divine compulsion or fiat, but intrinsically, by enabling man to fulfill the the threefold Law and merit beatitude. Christ receives this complete beatitude in his resurrection, which thus becomes the "formal" cause of our salvation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Aquinas's soteriology belongs among his more important and lasting theological achievements, if only for its articulation of the manifold way in which Christ brings Israel's history to fulfillment. Beginning with the moral precepts of the Old Law (fundamentally the Decalogue, in which Aquinas found the basic tenets of the "natural" law, our rational participation in God's divine wisdom for creation), Aquinas shows how Christ's perfect charity grounded his fulfillment on the cross of the Old Law's ceremonial and judicial precepts, through which he reconciles all things in himself. Aquinas thereby demonstrates the profound *unity* of the Old Law and the New Law, even while underscoring the infinite *newness* of the New Law, by which we share in Christ's divine Spirit. Moreover, Aquinas at the same time provides a rich understanding of the relationship between nature and grace: the moral precepts of the Old Law are "natural," but they are fulfilled and elevated to the ultimate end by Christ's supreme charity, a supernatural virtue. Calvary thus represents the transcendent fulfillment not only of Sinai, but also of the order of all creation. Aquinas was able to hold together these elements in a profound and delicate balance. Attending to his example, we should strive to do the same.

THE BROTHERS OF JESUS AND HIS MOTHER'S VIRGINITY

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IN CONNECTION WITH his extensive work on the historical Jesus during the last few years, John P. Meier has dealt with the issue of the "brothers and sisters of Jesus" on several occasions.¹ In particular, he has maintained that "from a purely philological and historical point of view, the most probable opinion is that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were his siblings."² He has arrived at this opinion from his treatment of the data in the New Testament and "a few noncanonical passages, viewed purely as potential historical sources."³ In this paper the discussion will center on the latter, postponing a detailed study of the biblical evidence and examining only the relevant non-canonical sources.⁴

¹ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 318-32, 354-63. See also the two articles, "The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus in Ecumenical Perspective," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992): 1-28; and "On Retrojecting Later Questions from Later Texts: A Reply to Richard Bauckham," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997): 511-27.

² Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 332.

³ Cf. Meier, "The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus," 7.

⁴ For a concise but insightful critique of Meier's methodological and philosophical presuppositions see J. Augustine DiNoia, review of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, by John P. Meier, *Pro Ecclesia* 2 (Winter 1993): 122-25. Also expertly to the point is Joseph T. Lienhard, *The Bible, the Church, and Authority* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 1-8, who delineates some basic flaws in Meier's biblical method, including the fact that it is not quite as objective as it claims to be (cf. 7). For additional material, see Roch Kereszty, "Historical Research, Theological Inquiry, and the Reality of Jesus: Reflections on the Method of J. P. Meier," *Communio* 19 (1992): 576-600; Avery Dulles, "Historians and the Reality of Christ," *First Things* 28 (December 1992): 20-25; and Richard J. Neuhaus,